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ABSTRACT

Most arguments for fiscal equity in financing America's schools have been based on constitutional provisions and on the socio-political dogma that underlies a democratic society. This paper approaches the subject using as its theoretical basis a document even more basic to the founding of the republic than the Constitution--the Bible. Using the King James Version of the Bible as a data source, a conceptual analysis of both the Old and New Testaments is undertaken to indicate strong support for the concept of fiscal equity in the financial support of education in America. This Biblical support is not only for the general concept of equalization, but also for some of the current measures that have been suggested, and are in some cases being employed, to equalize wealth disparities within states. The two most common proposals for equalization in education, full state funding and district power equalizing, have conceptual support in the Bible. There is also a Biblical basis for recapture provisions that are currently not very popular on the political scene. (Author/TE)

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BIBLICAL ANTECEDENTS TO FISCAL EQUITY: POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Biblical Antecedents to Fiscal Equity:
Policy Implications for Education

Most arguments for fiscal equity in financing America's schools have been based on constitutional provisions and on the socio-political dogma which underlies a democratic society. This paper approaches the subject using as its theoretical basis a document even more basic to the founding of the Republic than the constitution--the Bible. It is a report of conceptual/analytical research using the King James Version of the Bible as a data source. The analysis of the writings of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, indicates strong support for the concept of fiscal equity. This can be applied to equalization as it relates to financial support of education in America. This Biblical support is not only for the general concept of equalization, but also for some of the current measures that have been suggested, and are in some cases being employed, to equalize wealth despairities within states. The two most common proposals for equalization in education, full state funding and district power equalizing, have conceptual support in the Bible. There is also a Biblical basis for recapture provisions which are currently not very popular on the political scene.

BIBLICAL ANTECEDENTS TO FISCAL EQUITY: POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The California State Supreme Court started a revolution in school finance with its 1969 Serrano decision. Basing its reasoning on both the state and federal constitution, the justices concluded that the state system of financing education was basically inequitable and, therefore, unlawful. While this concept received a minor set back in the Rodriguez decision, there has been a continuous movement toward equity in funding for American public schools.

While Serrano highlighted the march toward fiscal equity in public education, the first real published concern regarding inequities pre-dated this decision by nearly half a century. Elwood P. Cubberly in his famous treatise, School Funds and Their Apportionment, expressed concern over funding for public education. His recommendation formed the basis for the foundation programs in school finance. Over the years most states developed some sort of foundation formula in their school systems. While this effort was laudable it never did really form an equitable system of funding public education.

Most arguments for fiscal equity in American education have been based on the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment of the constitution. Prior to the Serrano decision, these arguments were based primarily on the social

political dogma which underlies a democratic society. This paper proposes to widen the conceptual framework for the equity issue in American education by relying on a document even more basic to the founding of the Republic than the constitution, the Bible.

This paper is a report of a conceptual analytical research using the King James Version of the Bible as a data source. It is a straightforward presentation of verses in the Bible which form a basis for the concept of equity, particularly as it relates to fiscal matters. Since schooling as we know it did not exist at the time the Bible was written, conclusions are by implication rather than by direct application. Since the paper was written primarily to support educational concepts and not for any theological debate, no attempt at exegesis of any text is provided.

GLEANING

The earliest example of fiscal equity practiced in Bible times was at the possession of Palestine by the Hebrew people. Prior to entry to this promised land, God gave them laws for governance once they arrived. Among those laws were certain requirements to enforce equity among the people. Most of these were the laws relating to gleaning. Gleaning is picking up that which was fallen or left over at the harvest.

> "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. . . ." (Deteronomy 24:19)

This is the first recorded attempt to reduce the inequities that are bound to exist in a human society. It was anticipated that in this new nation there would be those who were poor. With the rules on gleaning, measures were instituted to overcome the inequities that would exist. At harvest time grain or other produce was to be left in the corner of the field. Also there was to be purposeful leaving of some of the grapes of the vineyard for the poor and those who were strangers in the land.

The law on gleaning was repeated on other occasions in the scriptures.

> "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger. . . ." (Leviticus 23:22)

An extension of the basic requirements is found in the book of Deuteronomy.

> "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands." (Deuteronomy 24:19)

This is a slight expansion of the basic rule; not only are the corners and the things that are dropped to be left for the poor, but anything that was forgotten in the field and was not picked up the first time through was to be left. The requirement continues in the next verses.

> "When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grape of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." (Deuteronomy 24:20, 21)

It is in this reiteration of the law that two groups, fatherless and widows, were added to the poor and strangers as recipients of the gleaning.

An example given in the scriptures of this law in action is the story of Ruth, who was not a Hebrew but from the land of Moab. She married a Hebrew boy who subsequently died. Ruth went to live with her mother-in-law, Naomi.

> "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Noami, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." (Ruth 2:2,3)

Evidently reaping was a well established custom by this time.

> "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. . . ." (Ruth 2:5)

Evidently there were large numbers of poor people and those who were wealthy had an organized plan for a systematic gleaning of their fields.

From the early laws of gleaning established in the scriptures it can be seen that there is a basis for fiscal equity. This was not a haphazard approach to equalizing despairities in wealth but a systematized planned program. The gleaning was not equivalent to current welfare plans which provide for handouts; instead it required some effort on the part of those who would benefit in this program. The recipients had to go out in the field and pick up the produce that was left there.

THE YEAR OF JUBILE

Another early Hebrew law dealing with equalization was the year of jubile.

> "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye all return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." (Leviticus 25:10)

"In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession." (Leviticus 25:13). This is a basic rule for the equitable distribution of land. At the time that the Hebrews arrived in the land of Palestine to claim their inheritance as provided by God, land was divided among the tribes in an equitable manner. This law given before the division foresaw the possibility that some people would eventually have great wealth while others would become very poor and have to sell this land. Land in an aggregarian economy is the basis of wealth and is necessary for survival. To rectify these desparities in wealth, laws were given that every fiftieth year land should revert to the original owner or to his family. Thus the cycle of impoversihment would be reversed with a fresh start in that fiftieth year, the year of jubile.

Foreseeing the problems that would cause in the normal real estate market, laws were also given to adjust the price of land in terms of the number of years until the next jubile.

> "According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee." (Leviticus 25:15,16)

Much of the 25th chapter of Leviticus provides methods of implementing laws for fiscal equity. For example, verses 29 to 31 distinguish between city property and country or suburban property.

> "And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that brought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed and they shall go out in the jubile. (Leviticus 25:29,30,31)

In other words, city property, which was not used at that time as a means of production, was not subject to redemption by the original owner during the year of jubile. However, property in small towns without walls, which was usually just a village or farming community, and country property, which was the basic means of production, was to be redeemed by the original owners in the fiftieth year.

Restating the basic principle:

> "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land." (Leviticus 25:23,24)

God, being a God of justice, set up the provision that land, which was basic to maintaining a productive life style, should not be lost by a family forever. Thus basic equity was implemented through scriptural injunction.

In contrast to the rules regarding the gleaning of the fields, there is no example in the scriptures of the year of jubile being actually utilized. There are, however, a number of citations using similar language as that given in Leviticus regarding the year of jubile and the redemption of land.

> "In the year of the jubile the field shall return unto him of whom it was brought, even to him to whom the possession of the land did belong . . . and when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers." (Leviticus 27:24; Numbers 36:4)

There are other scriptural statements relating to the proclamation of liberty at the time of jubile.

> "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath annointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;" (Isaiah 61:1,2)

This is an example of the use of the redemption of land concept. These two verses point to several related concepts: (1) preaching good tidings unto the meek, (2) binding up the brokenhearted, (3) proclaiming liberty unto the captives, (4) opening the prisons, (5) proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, (6) the day of vengance, and (7) comforting the mourning.

Isaiah's amplification of the proclamation of liberty shows how basic to the concept of Judaism and Christianity is the idea of reducing despairities of wealth. Fiscal equity is here closely related to proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord and to the day of vengeance. It comes upon those who accumulate vast amounts of earthly possession without distribution to those less fortunate. Later in the same book the prophet contrasts vengence with redemption. "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isaiah 63:4)

A later prophet referred back to the rules for redemption of land in the year of jubile.

> "Thus saith the Lord God; if the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them."
> (Isaiah 46:16,17)

In this text the jubile is referred to as the year of liberty and the laws regarding the return of land in that year is applied to gifts given by wealthy persons. This example distinguishes between an inheritance to his son and the gift he gives to his subject.

The prophet Jeremiah referred to the year of liberty and the concept of equitable distribution in dealing with servants. Laws were given for the release for indentured servants every seven years at the same time that the laws for the year of jubile were proclaimed. It is interesting to note that redemption of personal services came much more frequently than the redemption of property.

> "This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother." (Jeremiah 34:8,9)

> "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name;" (Jeremiah 34:13,14,15)

The application of liberty to personal service is shown in these verses. God had a covenant with Hebrew people that there would be a proclamation of liberty every seventh year. This again was in the interest of overcoming despairities which would naturally occur among the people, discouraging the possibility of accumulated wealth on one hand and extreme poverty on the other. The prophet Jeremiah describes the displeasures of God when this rule was not strictly followed by the Israelites.

> "Therefore thus saith the Lord; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed unto all the kingdoms of the earth." (Jeremiah 34:17)

This verse indicates God's extreme displeasure that liberty was not proclaimed, that inequities were not overcome, that the despairities in wealth were not decreased. The punishment for failure to take care of this matter was the dispersal of the Hebrew people throughout all the other nations of the earth.

Early in his ministry Jesus indicated support of the concept of equity as outlined in the early Hebrew law regarding the year of jubile and the proclamation of liberty. Preaching in the synagogue in his own home town of Nazareth he quoted from Isaiah 61:1,2 stating that his purpose here on this earth was to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. This is the same language that was used in the original laws of proclaiming

liberty throughout the land during redemption of property in the year of jubile. When he had finished reading the scripture, Jesus said, "This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:20). This gives some evidence that one of the major purposes of Jesus Christ on this earth was to proclaim matters of fiscal equity as a religious duty. By this proclamation he shows that the concept of equity spans both the Old and the New Testament.

CARE FOR THE POOR

One of the basic concepts of equalization found in the Bible is care for the poor. The word "poor" is used 204 times in the King James version of the Bible. Several other words are also used to give the concept of the poor. Some of these are: needy, fatherless, widows, and destitute. For purposes of this paper it is not possible to cite all of the references to the poor and the needy; therefore, only representative verses will be given.

General Care for the Poor

Early in their history the Jewish people were instructed to give care for the poor of the nation:

> "And if thy brother be waxen poor and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee." (Leviticus 25:35).

This same command was reiterated in a later book:

> "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in they land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. . . For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." (Deuteronomy 15:7,8)

This is a very specific command to take care of the poor and needy in the land, not only their sudsistence needs, but to "open the hand wide"; in other words, to give more than just the subsistence, to give liberally so that the poor might live a relatively comfortable life.

The Psalms indicate an even more advanced approach in care for the poor. "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." (Pslam 84:3,4). This shows a responsibility of more than just giving food or clothing or money to the poor; one is to help them in their daily living. This instruction is to defend the poor and to deliver them, i.e., protect them from those who have great strength or riches.

The New Testament also indicates a responsibility to care for the poor. Paul in his letter to the Church at Rome describes the relationship between various members in the

church. He states, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another . . . distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." (Romans 12:10,13). Paul here describes the responsibility of the members of the early Chrisitan church in the city of Rome. As an example of how this was being carried out in other churches, Paul later states, "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." (Romans 15:26). It is interesting to note that not only are the members of these two churches making contributions for the needy in their own congregation, but they are also concerned about the needy in the congregation in a far distant city. This action shows the basic concept of care for the poor and equalization of resources.

In writing to the Christian church in the city of Corinth, the same leader stated, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (II Corinthians 9:7).

It should be a happy Christian duty to give, not something that is just done out of necessity or with grudging reluctance; this is an exhortation not for general gifts to the church, but specifically written for giving gifts for the poor. In a later verse it states: "(As it is written, He hath dis-

persed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever." (II Corinthians 9:9).

The responsibility of carefor the poor was a rather broadly based understanding among the leaders in the early Christian church. Paul wrote to the church in Galatia and described to them his relationship with the other leaders in the church. Initially Paul had been in disagremeent with early church leaders regarding observing the rites of the Jewish faith. However, at a general council in the city of Jerusalem a compromise was reached. Paul, describing the result of this compromise, stated, "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." (Galations 2:10).

It appears that there was a general concern that while Paul might want to ignore the rites of the Hebrew faith, he should not forget his responsibility to give to the poor. Evidently this was not a burden on him for he stated that he was inclined to do that anyway. It appears then without question that the general concept of giving to the poor and relieving the need of the less fortunate was accepted in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Oppression of the Poor

In addition to the positive requirement to care for the poor, the Bible also has many injunctions against oppressing

or taking advantage of the poor. One of the early Hebrew laws was given to this affect. "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury." (Exodus 22:25). This basic requirement was that the wealthy should not charge an undue amount of interest in lending money to those who are poor. High interest rates have throughout the history of this world been a special method for taking advantage of those who are economically weak.

David in his book of Psalms speaks about the oppression of the poor on a number of occasions. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." (Psalm 12:5). This expresses the Lord's discontent with the oppressing of the poor.

The book of Proverbs contains many injunctions against the oppression of the poor: "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker." (Proverbs 14:30); "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker." (Proverbs 17:5); "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." (Proverbs 21:13); "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." (Proverbs 22:16); "Rob not

the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate". (Psalm 22:22). While these may appear to be merely wise sayings, having been made a part of the holy writ gives them some degrees of authority. The Proverbs gives clear statements against the oppression of the poor.

A more specific injunction on this matter is given by the prophet Isaiah:

> "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!" (Isaiah 10:1,2)

These verses describe woes that will come upon those who take advantage of the needy, the poor, the widow, and the fatherless. A later prophet also spoke to this issue, "And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor." (Zechariah 7:10). Taking advantage of those who have lesser economic resources is clearly against the teachings of the scriptures. The concept of equalization then has both a positive and a negative approach as supported by the Bible.

A Quality of the Righteous

In numerous places in the Bible those who care for the poor and needy are equated with being righteous. David stated, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." (Psalms 41:1).

The wise man in his book of Proverbs has many statements regarding those that give to the poor, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Proverbs 19:17). The implication is that taking care of the poor is actually giving a gift to God himself. This is certainly in line with the statement of Jesus in his ministry:

> "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40).

Clearly, caring for the poor and needy is a positive Christian duty since it is also giving to God. Other Proverbs related the blessing of giving to the poor: "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." (Proverbs 22:9); "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." (Proverbs 28:27); "The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it." (Proverbs 29:7); "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever." (Proverbs 29:14); "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:9).

In these Proverbs is seen the contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous; the righteous have considered the

need of the poor. They protect, defend, and plead the cause of the poor while the unrighteous do just the opposite.

Two of the later prophets also contrasted the righteous with the wicked:

> "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idelenss was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ezekial 16:49).

Sodom was a wicked city that was totally destroyed by God because of his wrath against its sinfulness. Ezekiel pointed out that one of the major sins of the people of Sodom was their lack of caring for the poor and needy within their boundary. The prophet Amos also spoke against this unrighteousness:

> "For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right." (Amos 5:12).

Refusals to take care of their poor are described as a mighty sin, a serious charge indeed.

The prophet Daniel, in speaking to the king, gave this bit of wisdom:

> "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor: if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." (Daniel 4:27).

Daniel plead with the King to give up his sinfulness. One of his major inequities was that he did not show mercy unto the poor.

In the New Testament two major examples are given in which giving to the poor is equated with righteousness. In Jesus' ministry a rich young man came and asked Jesus what he should do to have eternal life. Christ responded, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." (Matthew 19:21). Even though the young man had carefully kept the letter of the law, Jesus indicated to him that he had not kept the spirit of the law. The law referred to man's relationship to his fellow human beings and in this relationship the young man was lacking. Giving to the poor, then, is one of the characteristics of the righteous. This same story is repeated twice in other books of the New Testament. It is interesting to note the wording in Matthew's description, Jesus stated if he would be "perfect" he must give to the poor. In the narration given in Mark, Jesus stated,

> "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. (Luke 18:22).

It is very clear that even though this young man had lived an examplary life, that to attain the perfection he was

lacking in one thing. That was his willingness to distribute his goods to those who were less fortunate than he. By this story given three times in the New Testament it is quite evident that to obtain righteousness one must be willing to give of his possessions to the poor and the needy. This man was very rich and his riches had become a very important part of his life. He therefore declined the invitation of Jesus and went away without carrying out his responsibility.

Another story is told with just the opposite results. As Jesus was entering the city of Jericho, a very rich man named Zacchaes came to see him. In his confrontation with Jesus, Zacchaes was impressed that he had been very sinful and decided to make restitution for his sinfulness. Therefore he volunteered his wealth by saying:

> "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:8).

Jesus' response was, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." (Luke 19:9).

SHARING

A basic aspect of fiscal equity is sharing with an individual who has less. This concept is supported by several statements in the Bible. Probably the most striking is that given by John the Baptist who was a forerunner of Jesus. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none." (Luke 3:11). This is basic instruction related to equalization. One person has two coats, another has no coats; the instructions are to equalize so that both persons have the same number of coats.

This concept of sharing is frequently mentioned in the Bible when dealing with those who are hungry or destitute. One of the prohpets stated:

> "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? (Isaiah 58:7)

This same idea of sharing with those less fortunate is reiterated by the prophet Ezekiel.

> "But if a man be just, and do that which which is lawful and right, . . . And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; . . . Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel 18:5,7,9)

The prophet states that a person who is just will share that which he has with those who have less.

The concept of sharing is also found in the New Testament: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17).

This concept is repeated in the book of James.

> "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:14-16).

These two quotations from the New Testament provide a basic statement that those who have much should give to those who have little. This is a part of the New Testament faith. It indicates one's love to God as he shares in his love to humanity.

A more vivid description of one's responsibility in sharing is given by Jesus. As he was speaking to his disciples, He stated that at the second coming the people on the earth would be divided into two groups, illustrated by sheep and goats. To the one group He indicated his pleasure saying that when he was hungry, they fed him, when he was thirsty they gave him drink and listed numerous positive responses in the

area of sharing. When the good people asked when they did these things to him, he responded,

> "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40).

Jesus equates the sharing of one's goods with other people with sharing with Himself. With such a strong statement one should view it as a positive Christian duty to share with those who have less.

The members of the early Christian church believed and practiced this concept to its fullest end. The book of Acts gives a general description of the economic arrangements of the members of the church.

> "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." (Acts 2:44,45)

A restatement of this fact is found in a later chapter.

> "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts 4:32).

These verses describe a system of redistribution of goods, everyone sharing their possession with everyone else. Those who had much, shared their much, and those who had little, shared their little. The result of this sharing is indicated in later verses.

> "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts 4:34,35)

This is an example of the redistribution of wealth so that those who had need were supplied with the necessities of life. As one might expect, this did not function perfectly and the book of Acts describes the situation that resulted. "And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied there rose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the day of the administration." (Acts 6:1). Even in the near perfect society of the early Christian church there was some racial discrimination The apostles chose deacons to take care of the distribution of goods among the people holding membership in the church.

It is evident that this sharing continued for some time after the church was formed. As the church grew and its members disbursed throughout the Roman world, they did not forget the experience of sharing in Jerusalem. Members of Gentile congregations who had been converted also took part in the sharing. Paul wrote to the Romans: "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." (Romans 15:25)

Paul gave specific instructions to the members of the Christian church in the City of Corinth, regarding the col-

lection of offerings for those who were poor in the church in Jerusalem.

> "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (I Corinthians 16:1,2).

This is an interesting addition to the concept of sharing. Paul gave instructions that it be done in an orderly manner. They set a particular day of the week upon which to conduct their business of collecting offerings for the poor. He also instructed them to give as God had prospered them; in other words, they were to give in direct proportion to the amount of wealth they had; the more wealthy giving a larger offering.

As with other situations where the Bible requires a manner of equalization, the results of not sharing is given in very graphic illustrations. In each case there is an indication of divine retribution for failure to share one's wealth with those who have less wealth. A good example of this is given in a story told by Jesus, recorded in Luke. In this parable Jesus told of a rich farmer who became increasingly rich through the abundance of his crops each year. His abundance was so great that he did not have room enough to store all the produce which he raised. Instead of sharing it with

others he tore down his small barns and built even larger barns to hold the produce which he gathered from his fields:

> "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke 12:16-19)

The divine response is recorded in verses 20 and 21:

> "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:20,21).

This indicates the displeasure of God to those who gather riches to themselves and do not share with others. The rhetorical question is asked, "When you lose your own soul than what will happen to one's riches?"

In another parable, Luke 16:19-31, Jesus told of the agony of the rich man who did not share his good fortune with others. This is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Both the rich man and Lazarus, who was a beggar, died. The rich man was sent to hell while the beggar was sent to Abrahams' bosom. The rich man cried for Lazarus to come and bring him some cool

water because of his torment. Lazarus was not permitted to relieve the suffering of the rich man. This story illustrates the failure to share one's wealth with those who have less.

In a passage that parallels his earlier discussion with the disciples regarding their treatment of the poor as their treatment of Him, Jesus speaks to those who are to be separated at his second coming. He indicates his displeasure by stating: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41). As the reason for this harsh treatment he states: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." (Matthew 25:42). He continues with a list of positive sharing requirements which these individuals have not done, and finally concludes with this classic statement: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matthew 25:45).

Those who do not share will suffer lasting punishment. It is a positive duty to share with those who have less. Failure to do so will result in divine retribution.

EQUALITY

There are several places in the Bible where there is direct reference made to the concept of equity or equality. David in one of his prayers stated: "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." (Psalm 17:2). David asked that God might view him and see within him the quality of equality even though he was a rich and very powerful man. He desired that God would find in him the characteristic of fairness and equality as he dealt with his subjects.

This same characteristic of dealing with others in a fair and equitable manner was reiterated in the New Testament in Paul's letter to the Christian church in the Greek city of Corinth. In reference to ministering to the physical needs of various members of the church, he instructed them that they should deal with each member according to their needs. Because he knew that some might object to this, he explained his instructions as follows:

> "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." (II Corinthians 8:13,14).

Paul appealed for equality within the Christian church, specifically as it dealt with material possessions.

Paul restated his concept of equal dealing in a context not known in modern times, that of a master dealing with a servant. This time he wrote to the church in Colosse: "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." (Colossians 4:1). Paul suggested that people deal in the employment relationship in a just and equal manner.

Many of the direct statements regarding equality in the Bible are referred to as characteristics of God. In referring to the judgment day it is stated "with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." (Psalms 98:9).

In the next chapter it restates the same concept: "Thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob." (Psalms 99:4). Equality and equity are characteristics of God and the judgment day. There will be no unfairness or disproportionate dealings in the decisions of that day. The same thought is restated by the prophet Isaiah: "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. . . ." (Isaiah 11:4). Yet, with ample evidence that God's way and judgments are equal, the chosen nation evidently rejected His judgments. In speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, God pleaded his own case with the rhetorical question, "Yet ye say, "The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Ezekiel 18:25).

This same plea is reiterated in the 29th verse of the same chapter and again in chapter 33 of the same book. God contrasts his ways of equality in judgment with the unequal and unjust ways of the Hebrew nation. Amid their inequality he laid solid claim to equality as his own characteristic. By God's own claim he deals justly and with equity with the people of the world.

To illustrate the basic equity with which God deals with people, numerous statements are made that God is no respector of persons, that he looks at each one as an individual, and that he makes no invidious distinctions. This is illustrated most strikingly in the vision of Peter the disciple at the time of the early Christian church. The question had risen in the church whether the gospel of Christ should go only to those of the Jewish nation or should be made available to people of other nationalities. In his vision, Peter was shown that there are varieties of people who are worthy of receiving the gospel of Christ. This was a new revelation to Peter. He stated the truth of equality. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34).

This same truth was stated many centuries earlier by a widow woman to King David: ". . . Neither doth God respect any person. . . ." (II Samuel 14:14). Paul, the great mis-

sionary to the non-Jewish world, reiterated the concept of God's equity in several of his letters to early Christian churches. "For there is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11). ". . . Knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." (Ephesians 6:9); "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of the persons." (Colossians 3:25).

Jesus, in one of his discussions with his disciples, gave an example of how God does not make a distinction between people. He was watching as people put money into the offering box:

> "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark 12:42-44).

Jesus used this as an example of the relative wealth of individuals. In this case the gift given by a poor widow was counted as more than the gift given by the very rich person. While the rich had given a large gift, it accounted for only a small portion of their total wealth while the widow's very small gift had counted for all of her wealth. This shows the

basic equity with which God views the gifts of people on this earth. He counts them in terms of the person's ability to give.

Since God utilized the concept of equity in his dealings with human beings, one might expect that he would require the same of humans as they deal with each other. The requirement to make no distinction between persons was given early in the history of the Jewish people. In the rules for the operation of government among the nation, several statements are made in this respect:

> "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor." (Leviticus 19:15).
>
> "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great. . . ." (Deuteronomy 1:17).
>
> "Thou shall not wrest judgment; thou shall not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous." (Deuteronomy 16:19).

This states the essence of fairness and equality given as a basis for law in the nation soon to be formed by the Jewish people. It was God's intention that equality should prevail in the land and people of wealth should not be favored in judgment over those who were poor. This is summed up by the very straightforward statement, "To have respect of persons is not good. . . ." (Proverbs 28:21).

In the New Testament, the book of James emphasizes the problems with inequality with a simple illustration:

> "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment: And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? . . . But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." (James 2:1-4,9).

James was very direct in his statement regarding the respect of persons or dealing in an inequitable manner with people. He states that it is sin to do so. Very clearly, then, the Bible teaches that equity and equality is not only a characteristic of God but a positive duty for people in this earth.

ANALYSIS

The presentation given here clearly provides a Biblical basis for the concept of fiscal equity. The texts presented support this concept range from the early days of the Hebrew nation through the time of Christ into the formation of the early Christian church in the first century. The various textual citations have been organized around five conceptual streams of thought. With the exception of gleaning, they find support in both the Old and the New Testaments.

The most direct support for the concept of fiscal equity is found in a text referring to equality, equity, and respect of persons. While equity is required of man, it is also a quality of God. The disciple Peter discovered in vision that God is no respector of persons. In other words, he does not differentiate between persons on the basis of their wealth or other characteristics unrelated to basic goodness. This, then, lends strong support for the initial decisions in the Serrano case that the quality of education should not be based upon distinctions of wealth. The education of one child is as important as the education of any other child.

The general of sharing of wealth is also given strong support in the Bible. This, of course, supports the concept of equalization among school districts within the state. John the Baptist stated that one who had two coats should give

to one that has no coat. In school finance terms this relates to recapture provisions which are generally considered politically unviable, especially with the resurgence of the right wing in American politics.

The practice in the early Christian church of holding all property in common provided equitable support of all the members of the church. This would generally be equated with full state funding for education which was acceptable to the Serrano court as a method by which equalization can be attained. While the concept of communal property has generally been rejected by most Americans, it has been found very effective in some isolated population groups within the country. Full state funding as a solution to the inequities found in state school finance systems would find strong support within the scriptures as well as the courts.

In general, there is a strong basis in the Bible for caring for the poor. In the case of school finance, all the citizens of the state should be concerned about the education of those children from the poorest districts. There is a tendency among politicians from wealthier districts to oppose any kind of support at the state level for the poor districts. However, there is strong opposition in the Bible to oppression of the poor which should give these politicians some cause for concern. The Bible gives examples, such as in the New Testament church, that this care for the poor was not only at the local

level, but also at a national level. This would seem to indicate that support for poor schools should be not only within districts or counties, but within the entire state. As churches in the far reaches of the Roman empire took up collections for the poor members of the church in Jerusalem, so school districts in the far reaches of the state should provide fiscal support for education of children in the poorest districts.

Most revolutionary of the Biblical concepts of equalization is that found in the Old Testament year of the jubile. This gives probably the strongest support for the concept of redistribution of resources. A periodic review of despairities in wealth should take place. Since it was a fifty year time period between jubiles, it would follow that there should be allowance for some local variation and a small accumulation of wealth due to increased effort or differences in ability. It is interesting to note that this redistribution of land at the year of jubile did not affect the larger cities. From this it can be seen that the modern concept of municipal over-burden may have some basis in ancient times.

The very earliest example of equalizing despairities in wealth is found in the early Israeli laws regarding gleaning. This was a general system of care for those who had become impoverished either through their own lack of good management or through natural processes. The gleaning was not typical of modern giveaway programs or food stamps; rather, it required

some effort on the part of those who would reap its benefits. They had to go to the fields and actually do the work of picking up produce that had been left for them. This supports the concept of reward for effort found in district power equalizing formulas. The more work they did the more food they gathered. In district power equalizing the higher the tax rate the district is willing to place upon itself the more funds it obtains to support the schools.

CONCLUSION

From the long list of Bible texts presented and the foregoing analysis, it can clearly be seen that there is strong support in the Bible for the concept of fiscal equity. This can be applied to equalization as it relates to financial support of education in America. This Biblical support is not only for the general concept of equalization, but also for some of the current measures that have been suggested, and are in some cases being employed, to equalize wealth despairities within states. The two most common proposals for equalization in education, full state funding and district power equalizing, have conceptual support in the Bible. There is also a Biblical basis for recapture provisions which are currently not very popular on the political scene.

While litigation for fiscal equity in school finance has been based on the equal protiection clause of the fourteenth amendment of the constitution, it can be seen here that there is even a more basic responsibility to those who have given some degree of loyalty to the Bible. With the Judeo-Christian heritage of the American people it is surprising then that the concept of equalization in the financial support of education has not found wider popularity. It is proposed here that both those providing leadership in the political arena and experts in school finance should rely on the philosophical presentation of equity and equality as seen in the Bible.